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MAYOR JOHN B. HYNES

OUTLINES

NEW TAX PLAN FOR CITY OF BOSTON

PROPOSES FIVE-POINT PROGRAM TO LIFT THE CITY OUT OF FINANCIAL DOLDRUMS AND RESTORE IT TO ONE OF THE NATION'S GREATEST CITIES

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MAYOR HYNES OUTLINES NEW TAX PLAN FOR CITY OF BOSTON

The theme of my discourse today is "Boston, whither goest thou?" or, more pointedly, is Boston heading for the rough rocks of danger and despair, or are we heading for the happy harbor of safety and security? From this discussion perhaps you may draw a conclusion.

Let me preface what I have to say today by these observations. For at least one generation the municipal government of Boston, and the city itself, has been treading water. We have followed the line of least resistance. We have been slaves to expediency. We have stayed afloat, it is true, but it is also true that we have been outdistanced by other cities in the fiercely competitive race for business, industry, and commerce — the lifeblood of every great city. For a long period, too long a period, we courted and embraced the goddess of ennui. Only the tough fibers woven into our city over the generations that have gone by have kept us whole and intact.

It might be possible to get some vicarious pleasure in pointing an accusing finger at those who might be held responsible for the present economic situation in our city, but there is hardly any sense in such an attitude. We have cried over spilt milk too long. To attempt to unravel the threads of the past will butter no parsnips today or tomorrow. Regardless of who is responsible — be it a succession of shortsighted businessmen, or a succession of shortsighted public officials, or a combination of both — it is of no importance or help in the solution of our present problems. The fact of the matter is that during the past few decades we were looking the other way as the parade went marching by. Perhaps we were enamored and captivated by thoughts of our glorious past. Perhaps, even today, we think too much of the things that were, rather than of the things that could be.

TODAY AND THE FUTURE

Is it possible for us to direct our thinking to the things of today and the things of the future? Is it possible for us to profit from the experiences and mistakes of the past? Is it possible for us to regain our former place as one of the most progressive, forward-looking cities of the world? I believe it is. In fact, I am convinced we have already begun to think in that manner.

During recent years a new spirit has been awakened in Boston. You feel it. I feel it. It is in the air. This meeting here today is a manifestation of that new spirit. If we take advantage of the changing atmosphere, if we foster and nourish it, and if we are determined to get things done in Boston which must be done, our city, ten years hence, or even before that time, will once again be in the forefront of the great cities in our land.

To accomplish worth-while results, however, means that we must work in harness. Each influential element in the community must be willing to pull its share of the load. Each armchair strategist who sees the mote in the other fellow's eye, but never in his own, must be made to realize that no army ever won a decisive battle unless its officers and men worked and fought together to overcome every obstacle in the way of victory.

To unfurl the flag of victory over Boston means a hard battle. We can win that battle. We can win it not by dreaming or hoping, but by fighting — and fighting together.

My talk today will be in two parts, the first of which will be concerned with the city government itself and some of its chief problems. The second part will be concerned with those matters in which the municipal government must rely on private enterprise for the fullest cooperation if our city and our community hope to arrive at the goal which spells progress.

With respect to the city government, may I be bold enough to say that I think it has turned a leaf for the better. Certainly your municipal government has not gone backward in the five years I have had the honor and privilege to serve as Mayor. In almost every field of municipal activity we have made progress. We are, however, far from satisfied, for we well realize that there are areas where our progress has been slow to the point of exasperation, chiefly because in those areas we are faced with deep-rooted conditions which are curable only by major upheavals or major surgery.

PROBLEMS OF GOVERNMENT

One of these problems — an irksome problem, to say the least — is the valuation and assessment of properties in Boston. You might be interested to know that 25 years ago, back in 1930, the valuations in Boston totaled $1,972,148,200. Today the valuations in Boston are $1,566,676,000, or some $400,000,000 less than in 1930.

In those dear, dead days beyond recall, commonly referred to as the roaring twenties, or the years of wonderful nonsense, property values in Boston went up by leaps and bounds, at least on the books of the city. To some extent new taxable construction was responsible for the high valuation figure, but a significant part of that overall valuation figure was a higher scale of valuations placed on commercial, industrial, and business properties in the city. Residential properties, on the whole, were not increased.

Because times were good, and money flowing in a seemingly unending stream, no great objection was

voiced to the higher valuations placed on commercial properties, and neither was there any great objection voiced to the strategy of leaving untouched the valuations on structures occupied by the voters.

Everyone was relatively happy until the great bubble of the 1920's burst. From that time until this time, 1930 to 1954, our valuation picture has been as scrambled and just about as decipherable as a futuristic painting. No mature judgment of our present assessment situation and practices can be formed unless there is some knowledge of what has transpired in this field from which the city receives its main source of income.

When the great depression struck with all its fury in 1930, Boston, as well as other cities and towns, was in a dilemma. The expenditures and commitments of the city were geared up to the income received from the peak valuations. Suddenly the city was faced with the task of meeting these more or less fixed obligations from a violently shrinking tax base. The city officials were in a quandary. If property values were to be reduced to a point commensurate with new, depression-period values, economies of great magnitude, involving the discharge of large numbers of employees, at a time when jobs were at a premium, would have to be instituted. The officials, humanely, did not take that course.

They grimly held on to the old and higher valuations, believing the depression would soon blow over and good times would once again return to justify the higher values. But the reluctant, hold-the-line taxing officials were soon faced with a new force, the Appellate Tax Board, which was created in 1930 with authority to make adjustments in values established by local assessors. The power and authority of this new governmental agency, exercised directly or indirectly, broke the dam, and property values came tumbling down. In the five-year period, 1930 to 1935, property values in Boston dropped $300,000,000.

As values dropped and no new income source became available, and no major economies were made, the tax rate began to spiral upward, and from 1930 to date, with a few minor exceptions, that is the direction in which it has been going.

In view of the fact that real estate is, by far, the main income producer through which the city meets its obligations, it is apparent that unless taxable valuations increase perceptibly, or the expenditures of the city decrease perceptibly, there is little prospect for a lower tax rate figure.

LOWER TAX RATE?

At this point, you might well inquire, is there no hope whatsoever for a lowering of the tax rate? There is some hope. Here are a few ways it can be accomplished:

1. A sizable jump in the amount of new taxable construction.
2. A new source of income of substantial proportions.
3. A reduction in city costs of substantial proportions.
4. The formation of a regional or metropolitan type of government.
5. A greater sharing in the income of the state government.

Very briefly, I will discuss these possibilities.

As far as I know, there is no significant new taxable construction in the offing, and, until the tax rate is lower than at present, considerably lower, no such construction can be expected.

This might be a good time to bring this rather startling comparison before you.

In the 25-year period, 1930 to date, the average new taxable construction was $7,700,000 per year. Prior to 1930 our new taxable construction averaged over $38,000,000 a year. In other words, today we are getting less than a fourth as much new taxable construction as we got 25 years ago. Rather an ominous comparison, is it not?

No new source of income which would result in an appreciable reduction in the present tax rate is available to the city, and no such source of income can be available without legislative authority. In this connection, it might be well to keep in mind that Boston's tax rate would be at about the same level or even lower than that of other major cities in our country if Boston had access to the same income sources as those other large centers of population.

A reduction in city costs which could bring about a much lower tax rate would entail huge economies of such a nature as to injuriously affect the safety, health, and convenience of our citizens. That kind of economy is out of the question. The formation of a federated or metropolitan type of government could result in better, more efficient, and more economical service to the people of the metropolitan area. Such a federation is one of the sensible answers to the growing problems of large centers such as Boston. In time it will be adopted here in our community, and in other communities throughout America. Any attempt to create such an authority at this particular time would, I fear, end in failure.

A greater share of the income received by the state government would be most desirable and most acceptable. A fairer and more equitable distribution of state monies would be of some help to Boston, but any help of substantial nature which we might get from the parent government would involve, I am afraid, the imposition of further taxes by the state government.

Therefore, as we consider our present assessment problems, which are inextricably entwined with the annual tax rate figure, we can arrive at these conclusions.

ONLY PARTIAL ANSWER

No improvements in assessing procedures, worth while and desirable as they may be; no revaluation of all the properties in the city, worth while and desirable as that may be; no steady improvement in the operating

procedures, and no steady whittling away at municipal costs, worth while and desirable as they may be, are anything but a partial answer to our financial problem.

Until the existing log-jam is broken, until we reach the point where Boston is once again attractive to new businesses, and until we reach the point where present Boston business will reconstruct or expand, we will not be out of trouble.

That log-jam can be broken, and, once it is, we will be on our way to better things. If our tax rate in Boston was lower by $15, there would be less cry about high valuations, there would be less demand for adjustments or abatements, there would be a great deal more new construction, which, in turn, would stabilize our whole financial structure. How do we break this log-jam, how do we get out of this morass in which we find ourselves, how do we get out of the strait jacket that presses upon us so tightly? In my opinion, the most efficacious, the most logical, and the quickest way to accomplish this purpose is to broaden the present tax base of the city.

With such a broader tax base most of Boston's troubles would evaporate into thin air. The tax burden in Boston would then be comparable with that of other large cities in our nation, thus vastly improving our competitive position. Petitions for tax abatements would be at a minimum. The proposed over-all equalization of values would not impose additional burdens on residential home owners. A broader tax base would mean new developments in our city, the tearing down of old structures, and the building of new ones. It would mean, as one excellent example, that investors would expend $50,000,000 to $75,000,000 in the development of the 28-acre site now occupied by the Boston & Albany Railroad Yards, without seeking any special tax consideration. It would mean, in short, a building and rebuilding program that would revolutionize and revivify the city, and permit the city government to breathe deeply once again without fear of explosive consequences.

I bid you to think soberly and seriously in this vein. I bid you to believe me when I state that no Mayor, be he the sage of the centuries, or be he a financial genius of acknowledged wizardry, can make two and two add up to five, nor can he sweep back the incoming tide with a broom. You don't need an extraordinarily wise man or a sparkling genius to direct the affairs of a city government, and certainly I fall into neither of those classifications. But, even if I did, I would have to say to you that I can do just so much with the instruments and tools at hand. Only by giving me, or my successor, better tools with which to work can you expect a better product.

AUTO TRAFFIC

Another current problem, acute, knotty, serious, and exasperating, is the problem of automotive traffic—and its lusty offspring, parking.

Within the lifetime of many of us here the whole tempo of American life has changed. No single innovation, invention, or successful experimentation is more responsible for that change than the motor-driven vehicle.

Not so many years ago the automobile was a luxury to be indulged in only by the well-to-do or the rich. Today the automobile is considered by almost every family to be a virtual necessity. Each year more than 1,000,000 additional automobiles take to the roads—take to roads which, in the case of Boston and many of our older and larger cities, were built to accommodate a much lesser number of horse-drawn vehicles, not to mention a much lesser number of people.

It is a temptation to recount the saga of the automobile and how tremendously it has changed the accepted mode of life of the days of our fathers or our grandfathers. I will dismiss that temptation merely by stating that the story of the automobile and what it has done to and for America is one of the most glowing and vitalizing chapters of our national history.

Over 30 years ago cities, including Boston, began to realize that the growing use of the motor-driven vehicle brought expanding problems as well as expanding business. Thoroughfares that were once satisfactory conduits for the nonmotor vehicle became inadequate to take the flow of an ever-increasing number of power-driven vehicles.

Narrow streets were widened; winding streets were straightened; modern paving was substituted for granite block and dirt roads; traffic regulations for the automobile were instituted; traffic police at busy intersections began to appear; old buildings were razed and parking lots took their place; indiscriminate parking on downtown streets became a safety hazard and a deterrent to the free flow of traffic; parking meters were installed to discourage the all-day parker; it became necessary to prohibit parking, in whole or in part, on some of the narrower and busier streets in the business areas; it became necessary to evolve a system of one-way streets and to line our curbs with traffic signs, and yet, despite these measures and many others, we could not keep abreast of the increasing number of vehicles using the streets of the city.

Other means were sought to ease the growing and pressing problem of traffic and parking, such as municipally constructed or sponsored parking facilities in the downtown area; fringe parking; facilities close by transportation terminals; local shopping area parking spaces; further widening of streets; and the construction of a Central Artery which will cut through the very heart of the city itself.

Over 30 years ago the increase in the numbers and in the use of the automobile caught us by surprise. We were somewhat like the expectant parents who prepared for the arrival of a bouncing baby boy and were overwhelmed into a condition of mild shock when the stork deposited five rollicking, fluffy, and unpredictable little girls. Sometimes I doubt that we have ever fully recovered from the first realization that the automobile was here to stay.

ALL CITIES AFFECTED

We must not think, however, that the advent or the increase in the number of motor vehicles caused an astigmatism peculiar only to Boston. I don't know of any large city in the United States, or small city for that matter, not of comparatively recent vintage, whose traffic and parking problem is not as acute or just about as acute as Boston's. It is the number one problem of every large center of population. It is even a problem in the little towns with their elm-lined main streets. In comparison to its size and its population, Boston has been no more and no less traffic- and parking-wise than most of the local governments in our country.

I say this not to give the impression that Boston is smug about the present traffic and parking situation, or content that we are making sufficient progress in the solution of this problem. We are not smug. We are not satisfied. We are just as much annoyed and exasperated about the situation as those who criticize us and tell us to get going at greatly accelerated speed but have no intimate knowledge of the difficulties or the interminable delays that are encountered on every hand, and about which we can do only what the law and the state of our finances and the congested character of the inner city permits us to do.

We realize, for example, that eight or more parking facilities each accommodating 500 or 600 cars are needed in the mile-square downtown area of Boston, and that this need will be aggravated when the Central Artery is completed about two years hence. We know, also, that there is a point beyond which the city should not go in the destruction of valuable properties for parking facilities. We also recognize that unless parking facilities are very close to places where people work, or shop, or worship, or seek pleasure, those facilities are neither fully utilized nor are they self-supporting.

We appreciate the parking problems in the local shopping areas, and we will continue to create parking spaces adjacent to these areas if it is proved that those built or under construction are used to advantage by local shoppers. We know that the creation of the oft-recommended, vast parking areas on the periphery of the city is not a workable solution to the intown parking problem unless those areas are immediately adjacent to direct rapid transit lines to the heart of the downtown city.

We know, in brief, that we have a traffic and parking situation in Boston alike to in many ways, and yet utterly different from, that of many other large cities. We know that the city government has a primary, if not indeed a selfish, responsibility for the improvement of that situation. We know that unless traffic can move with reasonable freedom through our streets, and unless a reasonable number of parking spaces are available as close as possible to vital business and shopping locations, our city will be further affected by decentralization to the point where serious and tragic consequences may ensue.

There is now no doubt that the automobile is here to stay. There is doubt, however, that our business will stay in our city if we do not expend our best efforts in meeting the challenge the motor vehicle has presented. We do not underestimate the length and the breadth and the force of that challenge, and I hope you do not. I also hope you will have confidence that we of the city government will give no less than our best efforts in this respect.

I cannot leave this topic without a word or two of praise for the present officials in the state government, and for the officials who preceded them. Former Governor Paul A. Dever, and our present Governor, Christian Herter, together with their capable Public Works Commissioners, William Callahan and John Volpe, have been intensely aware of the traffic situation in Boston, as it related to the general traffic situation and general well-being of the Commonwealth. All of these gentlemen have been of the same mind—that a state-wide or metropolitan traffic pattern of improvements which stopped at the boundary lines of Boston would be wasteful, incongruous, and incomplete.

Fortunately for Boston, and for the state, these officials, the late chairman of the Metropolitan District Commission, William Morrissey, and its current chairman, Charles Greenough, have been neither niggardly nor shortsighted in the planning and construction of new thoroughfares which, when completed, will open up the City of Boston, give it a new look, a new accessibility, and give us a new incentive to remake and rebuild our city to meet modern-day competition, without destroying the charm and the character which sets Boston out as one of the most distinct and attractive cities in our country.

In my comments concerning the valuation situation in Boston and its by-product, the tax rate, and in my comments relative to those rambunctious twins, traffic and parking, I have purposely refrained from the use of many facts and figures which might be revealing and enlightening. This was done for two reasons: first, because of time limitations, and, second, because at a later date during this series of meetings, specific, detailed information about these matters will be furnished by the department officials most concerned. For the same reasons I have given no mention to many other functions of municipal government of more or less importance.

At the beginning of the second part of this discourse, and with reference to these plans, proposals, projects, or varied activities in which the city government cannot be both the principal performer and the supporting cast, may I state that I believe a bright and promising future for Boston is the ardent desire and burning wish of everyone here, and many who are not here.

What then can be done, what should be done, what must be done, and how it can, or should, or must, be done, and who is going to do it so that our desires may be realized and hopes fulfilled, is a topic deserving of much serious debate and solid thinking.

In the time remaining to me I cannot present to you a complete or fully charted program of general improvements that should be made, or activities entered into, which will make for a better Boston.

SOME PROPOSALS

I shall attempt, however, to outline a few proposals which are possible of accomplishment, and which will have a beneficial effect on Boston's future.

Just recently you have read of a plan for urban redevelopment in that section of the South End commonly referred to as the New York Streets area.

What is meant by urban redevelopment? What is its purpose? What do we stand to gain?

Ever so briefly, urban redevelopment aspires to eliminate certain substandard, decadent, blighted areas in a city, and to redeem and reconstruct such areas to a use which will strengthen the economic base of the city.

I think there is no disagreement on the need for urban redevelopment in Boston. We are an old city. The shifting winds of time have left their marks upon our face. Parts of our city which were once flourishing, attractive, and desirable sections in which to live or do business have materially changed. Indeed, some of our sections have deteriorated so much that there is not even the faintest hope for a change for the better, except in the adoption of a redevelopment plan which calls for joint action of government and private enterprise.

In our city, as in other of the large and old cities, the only way that decay and blight may be uprooted, and the only way its contaminating influences may be stayed, is by a complete physical change in the affected neighborhood or area.

OFF-STREET PARKING

The area comprising the New York streets is that kind of a problem. Through the urban redevelopment law we intend to wipe out all but a few structures in this 24 acres within our city. The district, largely composed of substandard dwellings, will be dedicated to light industrial and commercial use. A new street pattern will be instituted. Restrictions on use of the land will run with the land. Off-street loading and off-street parking will be typical requirements within the area. No noxious or offensive-type business will be permitted, nor will places of amusement or taverns be allowed.

The cost of this redevelopment project will be about $4,300,000, of which the federal government, which has already given preliminary approval, will assume two thirds, or about $2,900,000. The other third of the cost, or about $1,400,000, will be borne by the City of Boston. The city, however, will be given credit for any land or buildings owned by it in the area, and will also be given credit for the cost of utility installations, bringing the net cost to the city down to about $900,000.

After the area is cleared, the land will then be sold at fair value, and from the proceeds of this sale, estimated to be $750,000, the city will receive one third, so that the eventual net cost to the city will be about $650,000. Within a few years the city will recover its investment in new taxes. The elimination of a congested, disease-breeding section of the city will also be reflected in lower municipal costs.

The new development will utilize but 16 of the 24 acres for building sites, thus insuring free traffic movement and precious light and air for the area.

In going ahead with this, the first of the urban redevelopment efforts in our city, we shall learn a great deal. We believe that the closeness of this pilot area to the financial, wool, leather, insurance, retail trade, and garment district, and its ready accessibility to the Central Artery, will insure its success as a desirable section for light industrial and commercial purposes.

We have other areas in our city in mind for such urban redevelopment, and if it is a fact that private industry is willing to cooperate, participate in, and share in the short-term and long-term advantages which will follow from the elimination and redevelopment of eye-repelling, decadent, congested areas of our city, we will have turned the corner toward better days.

Urban redevelopment presents an opportunity for the private enterprise to improve the general situation of the city while, at the same time, improving its own position. I am confident that private enterprise will accept the challenge.

NEW ZONING CODE

Another proposition which calls for your consideration is a new zoning code for the City of Boston. Like its blood brother, urban redevelopment, a rezoning of the city is not merely desirable. It is, in fact, essential.

The present zoning statute of the city was put into effect 30 years ago, and, though there have been some changes in the original zoning law and map, nevertheless it is recognized by all informed persons that the present zoning code of the city is a patchwork quilt, outdated and outmoded, and sadly in need of complete revision.

Since the enactment of the original zoning law there has been a revolution in the manner in which people live and do business. There have been sweeping changes in the character of neighborhoods, in the family and social life, and in the methods and types of construction. Our zoning law, with its rigid and almost inflexible provisions, did not contemplate these changes. As a consequence, the original zoning law of 1924, which in all good faith was intended to be a vehicle of planned progress for the city, is now moving only by fits and starts, and threatening to come to a complete halt with our destination still far away.

Recognizing the growing futility of the present law, two years ago I provided funds to our City Planning Board for a study of the zoning code, and for recommendations for a new code geared to meet present conditions and future possibilities. That study is 70 per cent completed. The final report and recommendations will be ready in the

late spring or early summer of next year. New enabling legislation will be sought so that the city itself may enact this code by ordinance, and amend it by ordinance, from time to time as the need arises. I hope you gentlemen will take the opportunity to favor this legislation, for by it, and through it, we can accomplish four major objectives.

We can strengthen the economy of the city and enhance its livability by encouraging new construction of desirable types of buildings and by encouraging investment in new land uses.

We can preserve and protect sound homogeneous areas from the intrusion of incompatible land uses. We can, in an orderly and protective way, give warranties to both the home-owner and the business concern.

CORRECT PAST MISTAKES

We can, in equity, of course, correct mistakes of the past. We can reduce nuisances, gradually eliminate nonconforming uses, and make it obligatory, as conditions require, that new structures, and perhaps some old structures, provide for off-street parking or off-street truck loading docks.

We can have a flexibility, now lacking in the present code, which will permit us to readily adapt the code from time to time to meet changing conditions without going through the long, laborious, and time-consuming process of seeking amendments to the law. We can so provide, as a practical matter, that desirable changes in the code will not be deterred because of shortsighted or localized pressures.

No city such as Boston can afford to be without a modern zoning code. A living city is constantly being rebuilt. A city where changes to meet changing times are either very difficult or well-nigh impossible is a dying city. It is estimated that over the next 20 years we can have as much as $1,000,000,000 of new construction or alterations in our city, provided we make ready the road. One of our critical needs is the attraction of new business or investment capital to bolster our sagging tax base and improve the general economy of our city. A new zoning law is one of the facets which can bring a flood of new business and new hope to our city.

I must hurry along, but I cannot close my discussion without some mention, scanty as it may be, of a few proposals which are, in my opinion, worthy of general community support.

You have read something of a new world trade center in Boston. What is the over-all purpose of such a center? It is to make Boston, once again, a thriving seaport through which will flow imports and exports of every conceivable kind and description.

One of its primary purposes is to provide a conduit through which New England's products may be displayed and sold to foreign purchasers, and foreign products displayed and sold to New England buyers in an atmosphere which promotes good will, confidence, and understanding.

As a seaport city, Boston still has unplumbed possibilities. A world trade center, such as is visualized, is not a mirage. It is not the exciting dream of some hazy thinker. Such a world trade center has been in operation in New Orleans for some ten years. Through it New Orleans has captured business which has brought its port from sixteenth to second in the list of cities engaged in import or export business. It has meant to New Orleans a continued basic prosperity which makes that city the envy of many other cities in our country.

The New Orleans Trade Mart is a clearing house for national and international trade. In pleasant surroundings the domestic or the foreign buyers or sellers can meet to transact their business. Trade and shipping experts, research specialists, bilingual secretaries are available at all times to give advice and assistance. Library facilities are provided. Suitable accommodations are arranged for the visiting businessman, and his every ordinary need anticipated. The Port of New Orleans Commission publicizes the port all over the world. The result of all this, and the guiding spirits behind it—the businessmen of New Orleans — is that the city is no longer famous only for its gay atmosphere; it is now equally, if not more, famous as a thriving trade headquarters which brings profit and prosperity to that city. What New Orleans, situated on the Mississippi, 120 miles from the Gulf, has been able to do in comparatively few years, we in Boston, with a natural seaport, can also do.

For years upon end we have heard the plantive cry—"What happened to the Port of Boston, which once was one of the busiest ports in our country?" Again let us not point the recriminating finger. No matter what has happened in the past, we can, if we will, make Boston a great seaport once again. European countries, South American countries, our great neighbor to the north, Canada—are all anxious to do business with America. We can get our share of that business but not by wishing and hoping. We must go after it. We must do what a handful of enterprising men of New Orleans did ten years ago—organize and provide the facilities which will promote two-way trade. The handful of organizers in New Orleans has grown to a membership of 3,000, and the trade mart in that city is increasing in membership and influence through the medium of reciprocal trade missions, student exchange with foreign countries, and well-arranged travel groups.

Two years ago I visted New Orleans with a group of about 20 Boston businessmen. From that visit has come a determination to establish a world trade center here in Boston. A month ago, about 50 responsible concerns or individuals agreed to become founders of a world trade center in Boston. This is but the beginning—but a good beginning. Last night a second meeting was held at the proposed headquarters for our world trade center, and additional concerns or individuals pledged their financial support to this new venture.

Hardly a concern in Boston should fail to join this new organization, be it as founding or as sustaining members.

TO TEST OUR METTLE

This is something that can test our mettle. This is an opportunity for private enterprise to go ahead on its own, to prove that we can pull ourselves up by our own boot straps without seeking aid or assistance from any branch of government. This, a world trade mart, can unlock many doors that have been closed to us for far too long a period. This is the kind of thing that benefits labor and capital and, indirectly, every Tom, Dick, and Harry in the city. This is an opportunity to prove that Boston is on the upswing. This is where business must take the lead. This is a glorious chance to demonstrate to the world that Boston has taken off its kid gloves, and is ready to go to work.

Another opportunity, spelling real progress, also looms on the horizon. A stone's throw from beautiful Copley square is a piece of land comprising 20 acres, now used as railroad yards by the Boston & Albany Railroad Company, and shortly to be vacated by that company.

Not since the disastrous fire in 1872 has there been available in the heart-land of the city itself a cleared area of land of comparable size. To my thinking the manner in which this land is developed will have a distinct bearing on the future of Boston. A golden opportunity will be lost, and perhaps forever, if this most favorably located site is peddled off, piecemeal, to a variety of buyers who will make use of the land for a variety of purposes.

On the other hand, if this 28 acres of land is transferred to a purchaser who intends to develop the site as a commercial center, with office buildings, shops, a hotel, and parking for thousands of vehicles, we shall then have an area which will not only revitalize the Back Bay section of our city, and improve values all around it, but will also help reverse the alarming tendency of shoppers to do their purchasing outside the city limits where parking is not a problem.

Spacious parking arrangements at the Back Bay center site will be a magnet for those who now fear to drive the family automobile into downtown Boston. A new hotel with its own parking facilities and a convention hall-auditorium will also be magnets for large, free-spending convention groups which now cannot be accommodated in Boston, to our great loss.

To do all this on a grand, befitting scale means that an investment of $50,000,000 to $75,000,000 must be made. No one, no group, will risk this kind of money unless there is provided some reasonable protection for that investment.

This, then, is the nub of the problem, and, unless we can work out, by legislation, a protective plan which will give some guarantee of reasonable return to the large investor, there will be no breath-taking development of the Boston & Albany site, and there will continue to be a gradual decline in the character and property values of this section of our city.

A tax protection plan to encourage the multimillion dollar development of the Boston & Albany site is now being studied by a special legislative commission. There is opposition to this plan on the part of old established business interests in Boston. I understand the reasons for that opposition and, to a point, I am in sympathetic agreement. But, if Boston is ever, in our time at least, going to loosen the cords which are growing tighter around our economic windpipe, this may be the way, and this may be the time to look a little beyond today, to think a little deeper than personal interest, and to acquiesce in a plan which, in its fulfillment, can very well result in a much more prosperous and attractive city than we have at the present time.

To those who stand against this tax protection plan, and the subsequent large-scale development which is its purpose, may I simply say — think seriously before your objections are voiced, for you well may be standing in your own light. If ever Boston needed a shot in the arm, so to speak, it is now. A few years from now may be too late.

LAWS NEED REVISION

There comes a time when many man-made laws need revision. In the case of our tax laws I submit that that time is here. Not a revision that provides a loophole for the tax dodger, or which provides an easy road to riches for the itinerant promoter, or which makes heavier the burden of those who have borne the tax load through the heat of the day — but I do believe tax laws should be changed when that change will benefit a whole city, a whole community, indeed the whole Commonwealth.

I am convinced that a change in our laws which will permit of the proposed ultramodern development of the Exeter Street yards to the extent envisioned by willing investors will mark a new and inspiring chapter in the life of Boston.

If time were not so precious, I would like to discuss other physical aspects of our city; to speak of the need for a second tunnel to keep pace with traffic flow from the Central Artery; to speak of the need for thinking and planning for the helicopter age which is just around the corner; to speak of the desirability of a new municipal office building to replace the present obsolete and far from imposing structures on School and Court streets; but such discussions can wait for another time.

Permit me to close this long, and I hope not too boring, dissertation by stating that we are all concerned lest the creeping shadow of blight descend upon our city. At any cost this we must prevent.

Other cities in America, some of which were struggling for existence when Boston was a thriving city, have gone into action to remake, to rebuild, to revitalize their blighted and their downtown areas. The great cities of Pittsburgh, Detroit, Chicago, New Orleans, Philadelphia, Houston, and others are in the midst of planning or in the process of rebuilding their cities on a scale that challenges the imagination, and these major improvements are made possible through the vision and the medium of local capital and local enterprise, in cooperation with local public officials.

What these cities are planning and doing we here in Boston should be planning and doing. Your local public officials are ready to cooperate to the fullest. We await only for local capital and local enterprise to come forward.

Let us then put direction to our newly awakened spirit to accomplish what must be done. Only a few days ago, here in Boston, the president of the second largest insurance company in the world said that our area has the most mature, but still the most flexible, economy of any section of the country. He also predicted that our section of the country in the next two decades will see a new industrial revolution, and that we will grow and develop more than in any comparable period in our history.

Why then do we wait, we who are the guardians of this great center of a great area which, in the words of a highly competent authority, has the most flexible economy of any section of the country?

It is time we began moving forward, for, if we do not, the frightening specters of decadence, blight, and retrogression will haunt us.

These are awesome words, which have an awesome meaning to us, and an even more awesome heritage for those who will take our places. We must never, never let them characterize our city. For over 300 years, generation after generation of sturdy, determined Bostonians, refreshed and reinforced by the restless, surging blood of newly settled immigrants, built up for us a city which has no counterpart in the world—a city of solidity and substance; a city whose foundations rest on ideals and idealism; on fervor and faith; on wholesome reverence and respect for Divine law and man-made law.

Because of those who have gone before us Boston became a great city among the cities of the world. It should be no less great under our stewardship. It has been well said that God provides the food for every bird that flies, but He does not throw that food into their nests.

God has been good to us in this section of the country, but He will not do for us what we should do for ourselves.

I hope these conferences at the Boston College School of Business Administration will serve to open the doors to broader and more informed thinking in our community. I hope, too, that this series of conferences will open the doors to action.

CITY OF BOSTON
ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES DEPARTMENT
PRINTING SECTION